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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001235

SIPDIS

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CELEBRATES APRIL 13 ANNIVERSARY

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor,  
for Reason 1.4(d)

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (U) President Hugo Chavez celebrated the third anniversary of his return to power of 2002, after a two-day temporary ouster, with three commemorative acts on April 13. While swearing in what the GOV claimed were approximately 29,000 new military reservists in Caracas, Chavez explained his vision of a civil-military union and praised Latin America for affirming its own vision in the Organization of American States' elections for Secretary General despite U.S. pressure. During the inauguration of the third "Conference on World Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution" the same day, Chavez called for a new 21st century socialism and alleged that the U.S. has plans to destabilize Venezuela and to ensure he was not reelected in 2006. The grand finale was a Chavez speech to several thousand Chavez in downtown Caracas. All of Venezuela's television and radio stations broadcast the more than seven hours of speeches by Chavez, as mandated by the GOV. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) President Hugo Chavez and his supporters celebrated the third anniversary of his return to power of 2002 with commemorative acts on April 13. Dressed in the new Venezuelan military uniform, Chavez swore in what the GOV claimed were approximately 29,000 new military reservists at Caracas's armed forces headquarters. (Note: In his "Alo, Presidente" speech April 17, Chavez approximated 20,000 reservists.) In a two-hour national broadcast over all of the country's radio and television stations, Chavez said he was looking to create a civic-military union to fortify the physical and moral fiber of the country. The reserves are a strategic resource for national independence, Chavez asserted. To keep his promise for better funding, Chavez said, he was raising the stipend each reservist received for training days to 16,000 bolivares (approximately USD 8). He also criticized the U.S., claiming the USG had pressured other countries to influence the Organization of American States' (OAS) elections for Secretary General, but had been met by a solid and dignified Latin America with its own vision.

[1](#)3. (U) Chavez later inaugurated the third "Conference on World Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution" with a three-hour speech also broadcast on every Venezuelan radio and television station by GOV mandate. Having changed out of his military uniform and into a suit, he reiterated his call to the people of the world for a new socialism, adapted to the 21st century, to resolve the underdeveloped world's ills. Transitioning from anti-capitalism and allusions to obvious anti-American statements, Chavez claimed he was going to spoil the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon's plan to poison him, create a crisis in Venezuela, and ensure he is not reelected in 2006. He labeled Plan Colombia part of the plan, and pointed out that some of his supporters were preparing for a guerrilla war in case the U.S. invaded.

[1](#)4. (C) Speaking before a crowd of several thousand supporters in downtown Caracas that evening, Chavez praised the economic recovery and the increase in petroleum revenue. Once again holding the national audience captive by broadcasting on all radio and television stations, Chavez patted himself on the back for raising the petroleum royalties for foreign companies producing heavy crude in the Orinoco region from 1 to 16.6 percent, thereby gaining an extra 2.5 billion dollars. He assured his supporters that petroleum income was being used to support the missions and for other strategic public projects. Continuing on his economic theme, he said he hoped to raise the minimum wage to at least 400,000 bolivares (approximately USD 200) or as high as he possibly could. Two Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) contacts told Poloff they had been "strongly urged" to attend the event.

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Comment  
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15. (C) With over seven hours of broadcast speeches, Chavez made the most of his anniversary celebration. Again pitting Venezuela as David versus the big U.S. imperialist Goliath, Chavez tried to use the OAS elections to depict another victory for Venezuela. His expected anti-U.S. rhetoric specifically alluded to the CIA and Pentagon being involved in plans to destabilize Venezuela and make sure he was not reelected in 2006. Chavez counterweighted his negative anti-American message with praise for his own government and its plans to fight poverty and social ills in Venezuela and abroad with oil money and "new socialism." While Chavez showed his pride in the new reserves, DAO noted that the 20,000 included both reservists and active duty units recruited to beef up the visuals of the event.  
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